

Map the Solar System!

Young children are often fascinated with learning about the sun, the planets, and space science in general. First graders can usually recite the names of the planets and their order in relation to their distance from the sun. However, it can often be quite difficult for kids to get a picture in their minds of the sun and its distance from the planets that make up our solar system. That's because they're only just learning the basics of measurement and size.

So get your whole family involved in this project that uses toilet paper squares to map the solar system. Your child will be refining his counting and measurement skills—and you'll all have some good clean fun.

What You Need:

- Markers
- Scissors
- Construction paper or blank paper
- Large piece of paper (poster or half poster size)
- Toilet paper (several rolls)
- Masking tape

What You Do:

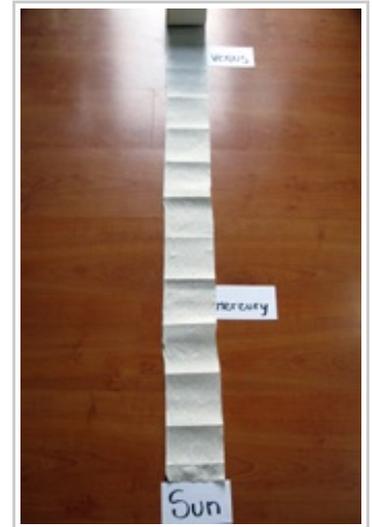
Setup: Use the construction paper and markers to make a sign for each planet and the sun. (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Sun) Use a large piece of paper to make a table that shows the name of each planet and how far it is (in toilet paper squares) from the sun, using the following scale: Planet Name and Distance from the sun (in toilet paper squares).

- Mercury.....4
- Venus.....7
- Earth.....10
- Mars.....15
- Jupiter.....52
- Saturn.....95
- Uranus.....192
- Neptune.....301

1. Tape the sign that says "Sun" to the floor.
2. Start at the sun and unroll the toilet paper. Make sure you have lots of room! You can do this all around your house or you can even do this activity outside.
3. Count up to the fourth square of toilet paper and tape the sign that says Mercury next to the fourth square of toilet paper. Keep going until you've taped each planet sign in the correct spot. Have your child count along with you as you go. (Note: This solar system model may not be confined to just one room in your home.)
4. Once your project is finished, ask your child to identify the planet that is closest to the sun and the planet that is farthest away from the sun. You can ask her any other questions about the planets and the sun as well.

Other Things to Discuss:

Planets that are closest to the sun are hotter than planets that are farther away from the sun. Using this



fact ask your child to make predictions about the temperature of various planets based on their distance from the sun. You can also talk to your child about how the planets orbit around the sun at different distances.

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